

Indigenous values in education benefit everyone

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Education is key to creating social change. This research explores how education can build relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities if Indigenous values are included in schools. Knowing that many non-Indigenous teachers may need guidance and support when starting to include Indigenous values, the researchers make connections with other teaching methods being adopted in schools and show how Indigenous values can benefit everyone.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

This research explores Indigenous values in education and how they can benefit all students. The authors point out that recent innovations in education are methods rooted in Indigenous communities for generations. Incorporating Indigenous values into school spaces can make education relevant to Indigenous students and give non-Indigenous students opportunities to learn about Indigenous history and culture through an Indigenous perspective. Indigenous values are missing from most of public school education in Canada. This is a concern as the number of Indigenous youth in Canada is growing and many of their teachers are non-Indigenous. We need to

make schools more engaging for Indigenous students and build relationships across Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities as we move towards reconciliation.

WHERE TO GO

Meeting the educational needs of Indigenous peoples and increasing all Canadians' knowledge of Indigenous values and perspectives is vitally important. The authors give three main reasons for including Indigenous values in education.

- To provide Canadians a more comprehensive understanding of all school subjects
- To address the social problems of today that disproportionately affect Indigenous people (homelessness, unemployment, and mental health)
- To improve our relationship with the land in support of ecological sustainability

The authors recommend ways we can apply Indigenous education in teaching.

- Land is the foundation of all Indigenous ways of knowing and practices
 - The land, the plants, the animals, and the sky are all teachers
- Acknowledge the source of teachings
 - Talk about when we learned something and who taught it to us
 - Spend time with Indigenous Elders and take inspiration from their teachings



- Build community
 - Recognize that everyone can be a potential source of knowledge
 - Create opportunities for students to learn from family or community members through activities or assignments
 - Facilitate smaller group discussions or collaborative activities
- Foster respect and create culturally safe spaces
 - Encourage students to speak honestly, listen to each other, and respect silence
 - Include students in decision-making or problem-solving
 - Admit what you do not know and how you might find out
- Focus on wholistic education
 - Practice education that involves students' intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional development
- Incorporate learning by doing
 - Use hands-on and project-based activities for students to experience learning for themselves
- Include storytelling and sharing or talking circles

HOW TO GO FORWARD

Learning to support and build relationships with Indigenous communities takes time and can start with you. To begin action towards Indigenous resurgence and reconciliation, the researchers suggestsome questions to ask yourself:

- What do I not know?
- How can I contribute to change in my community or workplace?
- How can I teach or learn about Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples?
- How can I build meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities?
- What world do I want our children to inherit? How can I make this happen?



Students and teachers of the Earth Songs course, University of Victoria, 2007.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

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KEYWORDS

Indigenous values, Indigenous education, reconciliation

CITATION

Restoule, Jean-Paul & Chaw-win-is. (2017). [Old ways are the new way forward: How Indigenous pedagogy can benefit everyone.](#) *The Canadian Commission for UNESCO's IdeaLab.*

TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Victoria acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory it stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.